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THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

How old is Man?
Saucers as scapegoats?
Salem's grim legacy
Psychic dentistry
St. Joan: witch?

139

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THE Unexplained
MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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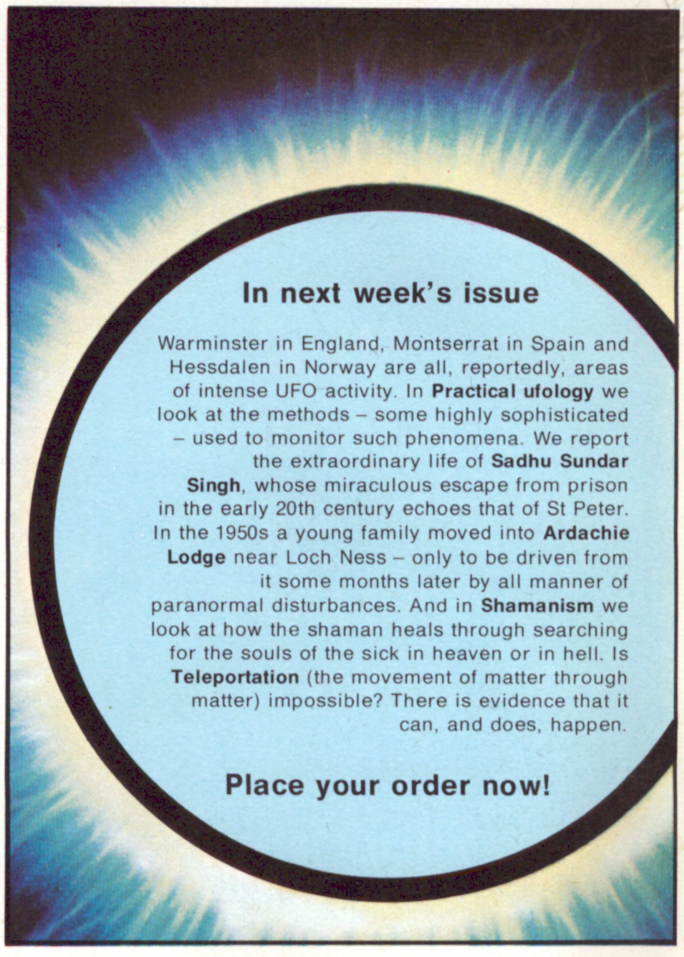

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Skeletons in the cupboard

Mankind is fascinated by its own origins, but is it wise to trust the confident statements about Man's ancestry offered by the scientists? PETER JAMES argues that the 'experts' on this subject have often been wrong in the past and could be equally wrong today

THE COVER of Richard Leakey's book *The making of mankind*, produced to accompany his 1981 television series, proudly states that 'Richard Leakey and the BBC have combined their efforts to put the true picture of human evolution before a general public for the first time.' But the claim that 'the true picture' of Man's origins had at last been revealed to an eager public is crassly misleading. The television series presented one view of human evolution – but only the year before the British Museum of Natural History, speaking with a voice every bit as authoritative as that of Leakey and his team, had produced a guide to an exhibition on Man's place in evolution that flatly contradicts the claims made in that series.

As a convinced evolutionist, Leakey had produced a family tree for Man's ancestors deduced from the available fossil remains – from *Ramapithecus*, a small ape-like creature

Previous page: a family group of our ancestors? An artist's impression of a male and female *Ramapithecus* with one offspring, somewhere in Asia between 8 and 14 million years ago. According to Richard Leakey, descendants of *Ramapithecus* evolved into *Homo sapiens*. Equally respected palaeontologists deny this

Right: Richard and Meave Leakey study a fossil fragment in East Africa. Richard Leakey's theories of human evolution modify Darwin's by emphasising the crucial role of co-operation as opposed to competition

Below: 'a prehistoric Columbus who reached America by land?' reads the caption to this 'artist's vision' of *Hesperopithecus* ('western ape') from the *Illustrated London News* of 1922. The writer was almost as imaginative as the palaeontologists who had conjured up this non-existent ape-man from a single pig's tooth

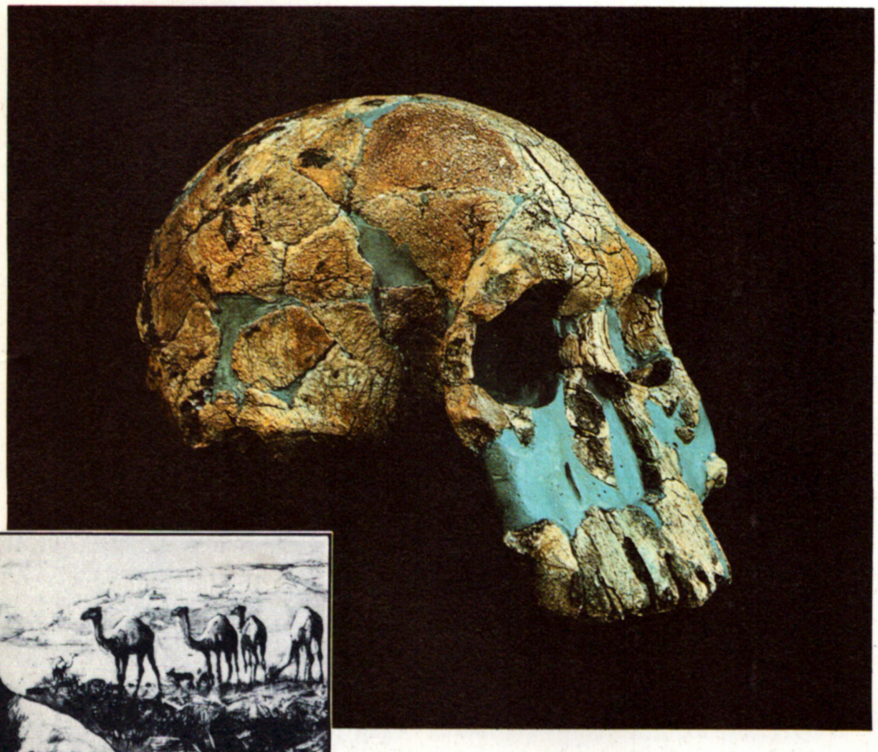
that lived in Asia some 8 to 14 million years ago, through the early African toolmakers *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus* to the early varieties of *Homo sapiens* proper such as Neanderthal man, and, finally, modern Man in all his races. Leakey's model, of a slow and gradual evolution of Man through millions of years of mutual protection and co-operation, is pleasingly argued and a refreshing contrast to the savage process of 'survival of the fittest' suggested by old-fashioned Darwinists. Yet, apart from its treatment of Neanderthal and later Man, one could easily find expert testimony to confound every link in Leakey's chain of human ancestry. And the Natural History Museum has completely repudiated the approach used by Leakey and other evolutionists to link fossil men together in a family chain. Their handbook describing an exhibition of all the fossil types used in Leakey's theories states categorically: 'we assume that none of the species we are considering is the ancestor of any of the others.'

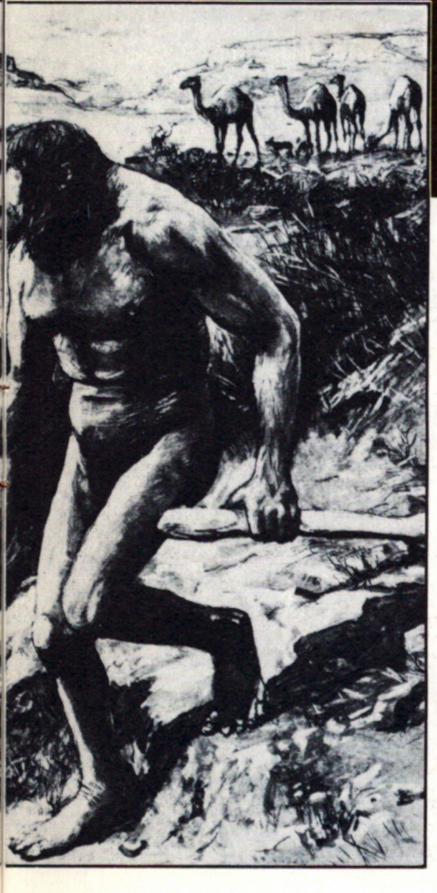
The truth is that there is, at present, no more a 'true' picture of human origins than there is of the origin of life itself (see page 170). Palaeoanthropology, the study of fossil men, has always walked on a knife edge of uncertainty, despite many overblown claims to have identified 'the missing link' or 'the oldest man'. Its history is riddled with ghastly blunders, outright hoaxes and staggering misinterpretations of the evidence, eventually revealed by subsequent research. There is probably no other field of modern scientific enquiry that is beset by so many embarrassments. Yet palaeoanthropologists continue to do their profession a disservice by making incautious, 'definitive' pronouncements based on remarkably slender evidence.

Richard Leakey, his wife Meave and his parents Louis and Mary are leaders in the field of palaeontology, and have given us some extraordinarily intriguing scientific discoveries. All the same, any idea that they, their rivals or their colleagues, have uncovered conclusive evidence for the origins of mankind must be dismissed as wishful thinking. There are still almost as many versions of human evolution as there are 'experts' on the matter, for a very simple reason. What is rarely stressed by the authorities is how paltry the evidence for human evolution really is. As stated by the natural science journalist John Reader, 'The entire hominid fossil collection would barely cover a billiard table.'

Much of the evidence from which 'human family trees' are constructed consists of mere scraps of skulls and foot-bones – or, most commonly, fragments of teeth and jaw-bones, the most durable part of the hominid skeleton. Reader's remark on the relevance of the assemblage of bones collected by Leakey from eastern Africa is quite fair: according to

Below: a reconstruction by Meave Leakey of skull 1470, found by her husband at Koobi Fora in Kenya in 1972. (The blue material does duty for missing parts of the fossil.) Samples of rock associated with the skull have been variously dated at 2.4 million and 221 million years old. Despite this gross discrepancy, Leakey has adopted and publicised the 2.4 million year value and called the skull 'the earliest suggestion of the genus *Homo*'





him, it 'is no more valid than any two living Americans are today representative of the entire population of the United States.' With so little evidence available, diseased or 'freak' specimens could give us a completely distorted impression of a particular species. And even when a rare consensus is reached on the classification of a fossil, attempts to fit it into an evolutionary sequence often founder on the difficult problem of dating.

How is a hominid fossil remnant dated? There are two main lines of approach. The most common one is simply to take the accepted geological date for the stratum it was found in – which is itself often arrived at through an estimation of the age of the other fossils it contains, based on an 'evolutionary' argument. This necessarily involves a measure of guesswork and assumption. Finds can often have worked their way into older levels – particularly in the case of Man who, in many times and places, has a habit of burying his dead – and conclusive proof that all the remains in a given stratum are of the same date is often virtually impossible. The other method is to make a radiometric determination in the laboratory, calculating the age of a sample from the residual amount of certain radioactive elements, such as carbon 14, that decay at known rates. But the radiometric methods, while often lending a spurious air of 'scientific authority', sometimes mislead the archaeologist as much as they do the man in the street.

A classic case in point is the dating of the controversial skull known as '1470', discovered in 1972 by Richard Leakey at the fossil-rich site of Koobi Fora, Kenya. From the volcanic soils, thought to be some 2.6 million years old, Leakey excavated 150 tiny scraps of bone, which were reconstructed by his zoologist wife into a skull that looked – surprisingly, considering its estimated age – distinctly human. The cranial capacity was around 50 cubic inches (800 cubic centimetres), not far short of the brain size of modern Man, with its lower limit of around 60 cubic inches (1000 cubic centimetres), and well above that of the 'ape-man' thought to have been the most advanced hominid alive at that time, *Australopithecus*. The latter was generally accepted to be a transitional form ancestral to Man; yet Leakey claimed to have found a strikingly human form at least as old as the earliest *Australopithecus*.

A short-lived triumph

Leakey announced to the world that he had discovered 'the earliest suggestion of the genus Homo', pushing back the age of Man by some half a million years. His triumph was, however, short-lived. The first dating test, run at a laboratory in Cambridge University, on the volcanic rock associated with 1470 produced a result of 221 million years, an impossible date for the skull – according to conventional wisdom even the first shrew-like mammals did not evolve until about 180 million years ago. Leakey submitted further samples of rock, and a second test produced dates of around 2.4 million years. This was the date selected by Leakey.

The general public was not informed of the staggering *218.6-million-year* discrepancy in the two results until Professor E. T. Hall, director of the Research Laboratory for Archaeology at Oxford, highlighted the case in a letter that appeared in the *Sunday Telegraph* of 3 November 1974. Drawing attention to Leakey's choice of the 'suitable' date and his silence about the other, 'unacceptable', result, Hall offered some stern cautionary words to archaeologists:

> The greatest temptation is the one which leads an archaeologist selectively to believe evidence which seems to confirm the theories on which he thinks his professional reputation rests. When the evidence comes from complex scientific techniques which are prone to error and involve principles not wholly understood even by the scientists themselves, the dangers are great indeed.

Hall's warning note was amply justified by later research.

Subsequent radiometric dates of further volcanic samples from the site, including some collected by the physicists from the Cambridge laboratory, range from a fantastic 19.5 million years to 290,000 years old. The latest date, if correct, would bring the controversial skull well within the period of other human remains, and completely destroy the claim that it is the oldest example of the genus *Homo*.

Richard Leakey has now considerably

Left: *Pithecanthropus*, or 'ape-man', as visualised by an artist in 1894. The name was devised by Ernst Haeckel, who dearly wished to prove the existence of intermediate forms between Man and the anthropoid apes. He was convinced that fossil remains that he found in Java were indeed such evidence; and he named the newly discovered creature *Pithecanthropus erectus*. His work was cited as evidence in the Tennessee 'monkey trial' of 1925. But modern workers insist that the fossils were actually the remains of a type of Man – now called *Homo erectus*

lowered his estimate of 1470's age, though he still maintains his belief that it is one of the oldest human fossils. The 1470 case, now something of an embarrassment to Leakey, is typical of the kind of mistake that palaeoanthropology has repeated since its inception. The new science, without any doubt, got off to a very bad start.

In 1925 the Darwinian theory of evolution went on public trial in the state of Tennessee, in a case that proved to be a turning point in the history of science. Schoolteacher John Scopes was taken to court for teaching Darwinian theory, and both sides – 'creationists' and 'evolutionists' – mustered a host of expert witnesses and testimony attracting worldwide coverage in the press.

A victory for evolution

Then, as now, the most emotive strand in the evolution debate was the question of the origin of Man. To the creationist mind, the very thought that human beings are descended from 'apes' is unnerving and repugnant. The idea of evolution – of some sort – has now clearly won the day over the dogma of old-fashioned biblical fundamentalism. But a curious twist is added to the story by the fact that public opinion on the crucial point of human evolution was won over at the Scopes trial by 'evidence' that we can now recognise as laughably weak.

Three exhibits were brought forward at the trial to demonstrate Man's descent from the ape. The first was the skull discovered at Piltdown, Sussex, in 1912, now well-known as a skilful fake concocted from a human skull and an ape's jaw.

The second was the discovery of 'Java Man' or *Pithecanthropus* by the Dutch scientist Eugène Dubois in 1891. Inspired by his teacher Professor Ernst Haeckel, who had already invented the concept of the *Pithecanthropus* 'ape-man', Dubois went to the Far East to look for the remains of this hypothetical missing link. He returned from Trinil in Java with part of a small skull, a leg-bone and some other fragments, found at widely separated areas of the same site. Despite Dubois's initial hesitancy, Haeckel encouraged him to publish the finds as remains of the same organism, a small-brained, upright-walking transitional form between ape and Man. Haeckel sent plaster casts of the finds and models of the reconstructed *Pithecanthropus erectus* around the museums of Europe, with a triumphant fanfare about the vindication of Darwin. Dubois himself, however, changed his mind on the grounds that experts had pronounced the skull to be that of an extinct gibbon. He hid the relics under the floorboards of his dining room, where they remained unavailable for study for 30 years. Today most palaeoanthropologists do accept that the Java skull is hominid. But at the time of the Scopes trial, the dubious status of the finds from Trinil hardly constituted first-class evidence. They were released from under the floorboards by Dubois two years before the trial – only to be pronounced by two of the world's greatest anatomists to be the remains of an early human being, not an 'ape-man'.

The third piece of 'evidence' produced in defence of Scopes and human evolution represents one of the most ridiculous blunders of modern science. On the basis of a single tooth discovered in Nebraska in 1922 an entire fossil species named *Hesperopithecus*, with ape-like characteristics, was reconstructed. The *Illustrated London News* published a two-page drawing of the

Below: the skull of the notorious 'Piltdown Man'. The white areas are the conjectural reconstruction, based on fragments of a jaw and cranium (brown). In fact the jaw was that of a modern orang-utan and the skull that of a modern human being. They had been expertly 'doctored' to disguise their origins and planted with ancient implements in gravel beds, in order to deceive palaeontologists. And deceived they were – until the 1950s

imaginary Mr and Mrs *Hesperopithecus*, romping around with extinct animals on the North American plains; as for the tooth, they reported that the scientists of the American Museum of Natural History 'are unanimous in regarding [it] as evidence of the former existence in America of a higher representative of the Order Primates . . . an extremely primitive member of the human family.' Unfortunately it was later discovered that the tooth belonged to an extinct kind of pig.

Wishful thinking

One might well imagine that modern palaeoanthropologists, with such advanced scientific techniques at their disposal, would no longer be able to produce 'howlers' like *Hesperopithecus*. However, one completely unpublicised reassessment proves that this is, sadly, not the case. The largest and most disturbing 'blank' in the hominid fossil record exists between 8 million years ago (when the last examples of *Ramapithecus* date from) to about 4 million years ago, when the first examples of *Australopithecus* appear in Africa. No less than 4 million years separate the two groups – and not a single reliably datable fossil has been discovered to bridge the gap. A historical theory lacking evidence for a crucial stretch of 4 million years might be thought to be in rather hot water. Some hope for the vindication of the theory was raised when Harvard scientist Brian Patterson discovered a fragment of jaw-bone at Lothagam Hill, East Africa, in 1970, in a stratum 5.5 million years old. It was a small find, but anything to plug the ugly gap was welcome, and the Lothagam jaw went on the records as the earliest *Australopithecus* fossil, adding $1\frac{1}{2}$ million years to the history of that genus – until a laconic note appeared in an anthropological journal of 1977, pointing out that 'detailed studies of the mandible now in progress do not support this diagnosis.' The characteristics of the jaw actually group it with modern apes such as the gorilla and chimpanzee. Again, palaeoanthropology had been misled by wishful thinking into another premature conclusion.

The closer one looks at the history of palaeoanthropology, the more conviction grows that this kind of selectivity and mishandling of the evidence, conscious or otherwise, has been – and still is – endemic. While bogus and irrelevant data have been eagerly pressed into service to support the evolutionary family tree of Man, the amount of anomalous evidence, shunned because it does not fit the orthodox preconceptions, continues to amass. It is only natural to ask – are the champions of human evolution simply kidding themselves?

On page 2806: the conventional view of the origins of Man – and some alternatives

Below: the jawbone found at Lothagam Hill, East Africa. It was hopefully identified as the earliest example of an *Australopithecus* fossil – filling an embarassing gap in the palaeontological record. In fact it now seems to come from a creature resembling modern apes

Bottom: youthful witnesses take the oath at the trial of their teacher John Scopes for teaching the Darwinian theory. The evidence of the experts was accepted and biblical fundamentalism lost the day – but that 'expert' evidence is thoroughly discredited today. Is modern orthodoxy concerning Man's origins more soundly based?

A blaze of glory

Was sorcery the secret of Joan of Arc's uncanny success in battle, as her enemies claimed? GRAHAM FULLER and IAN KNIGHT examine the evidence for Joan's paranormal powers and involvement with the black arts

JOAN OF ARC'S ENEMIES, the English, believed that she was a sorceress and a harlot, in league with the powers of darkness. There could, in their eyes, be no other reason to explain the ignominious defeats they had suffered at her hands. This English view of the Maid was incorporated 150 years after her death in Shakespeare's play *Henry VI Part 1*. In this Joan la Pucelle is shown being dragged away to the stake begging for mercy; to escape the flames she claims she is with child, naming first the Duke of Alençon and then the King of Naples as the father. When this ruse fails, her last act is to curse the Duke of York, who retorts:

Break thou in pieces and consume to ashes
Thou foul accurséd minister of hell!

The suggestion that Joan had, in her last moments, pleaded pregnancy to escape being burnt was a calumny of particular significance. An important element in Joan's sexual mystique was her claim throughout her life that she was a virgin: in the 15th century it was a recognised fact that the Devil could have no dealings with a virgin.

Earlier in the same scene Joan had spoken up for herself, maintaining that she was not only immaculate and chosen by God, but also of royal birth:

First let me tell you whom you have condemn'd:
Not me begotten of a shepherd swain,
But issued from the progeny of kings;
Virtuous and holy, chosen from above
By inspiration of celestial grace,
To work exceeding miracles on earth.

So it can be seen that the play draws together two opposing views of Joan – the English view that she was a witch and a whore, and her own view that she was the Virgin of God – and gives a powerful impression of the confusion that surrounded her trial.

The result of her trial was a foregone conclusion. The English wanted her dead at all costs, and on 2 September 1430 they had paid a colossal sum (10,000 francs) to her Burgundian captors for 'the purchase of Joan the Maid, who is said to be a sorcerer, a warlike person, leading the armies of the Dauphin.' Joan was a thorn in their side and one best removed as soon as possible. The justice that disposed of her was 15th-century justice – vastly different from modern justice. As Edward Lucie Smith pointed out in his *Joan of Arc* (1976): 'The trial was merely to legitimise the burning.' Nevertheless, the case against Joan had to look good.

She was initially indicted on 70 counts, many of them charges of witchcraft and sorcery; but by the time the crucial stage of her trial was reached, the number of counts had been reduced to 12 and all references to

Above: Joan's birthplace near the church at Domrémy in Lorraine where, as a young girl, she began to hear 'voices', one of which she claimed belonged to the archangel Michael (right). At Joan's trial her voices were taken as evidence that she was a 'disciple of the fiend', as was her admission that she had as a child danced round the Fairies' Tree, said to be frequented by evil spirits and those who practised spells. Further evidence of her paranormal powers was the fact that she was able to tell Robert de Baudricourt in Vaucouleurs the outcome of the battle of Herrings (below right) on 12 February 1429, the day it was fought 200 miles (320 kilometres) away near Orléans

witchcraft had been eliminated, save one. She was eventually condemned chiefly for her resistance to 'the Church on earth' – a theological crime.

The one remaining reference to witchcraft in the trial records concerned the 'Fairies' Tree' that Joan played under as a child. This is how the charge appeared in the Acts of Accusation:

> Near the village of Domrémy stands a certain large and ancient tree, commonly called *l'arbre charmine faée de Bourlemont*, and near the tree is a fountain. It is said that round about live evil spirits, called fairies, with whom those who practise spells are wont to dance at night, wandering about the tree and the fountain. The said Joan was wont to frequent the fountain and the tree, mostly at night, sometimes during the day; particularly, so as to be alone, at hours when in church the divine office was being celebrated. When dancing she would turn around the tree and the fountain, then would hang on the boughs garlands of different herbs and flowers, made by her own hand, dancing and singing the while, before and after, certain songs and verses and invocations, spells, and evil arts. And the next morning the chaplets of flowers would no longer be found there.

Gone with the wind?

But perhaps Joan herself, as she claimed in her defence, had taken the flowers away – or perhaps they just blew away. In any case, to hang a charge of witchcraft on a child's participation in what sounds like a country custom was ridiculous, even by 15th-century standards of justice.

Belief in, and persecution of, witches was at its height in Europe, and the English leaders may genuinely have believed that

Left: a quarter of a century after her death Joan was formally exonerated and rehabilitated; almost 500 years later, in 1920, she was canonised. This stained glass window of St Joan is in the chapel of Croft House School, in Dorset, England

Joan's triumphal entry into Orléans, painted by the French artist Jean Jacques Scherrer (1855–1916). After Joan's relief of Orléans the English Regent, the Duke of Bedford, wrote to the boy king Henry VI that the English retreat had been due to 'fals enchauntments and sorcerie'

Joan was a witch; the rank-and-file soldiers who had retreated before her in battle certainly thought she was one. Without the help of the Devil (so they reasoned) it would have been impossible for her to prevail against them. After Joan's relief of Orléans the Duke of Bedford wrote to the English King Henry VI that the retreat from Orléans had been due to

> a disciple and lyme of the fiend, called the Pucelle; that used fals enchauntments and sorcerie, the which . . . nought oonly lessed . . . the nombre of your peuple there, but as well withdrowe the courage of the remenant, in marveilous wyse, and couraged your advers partie and enemy's.

But apart from the Maid's uncanny success in battle, what other reasons were there to connect her with the black arts?

First, she appeared to be something of a seer. Her most controversial prophecy was foretelling the English victory at the battle of Herrings on 12 February 1429. On that very day Joan (hundreds of miles away at Vaucouleurs) told Robert de Baudricourt that the French had been heavily defeated; when the news was confirmed two days later, Baudricourt took it as a sign that Joan was divinely inspired, and sent her on her way to the Dauphin. In his book *Jeanne d'Arc* (1974), W. S. Scott suggests that this knowledge might have been the result of precognitive vision.

Second, there was the matter of her psychic knowledge of the Dauphin's secret prayer. When Joan first met the Dauphin at Chinon he naturally enough needed to be convinced that this country girl was indeed sent by God to lead his armies. Joan apparently was able to tell him about the secret prayer he had made – that if he were indeed the rightful ruler of France, God would defend him, or at least allow him to escape to Spain or Scotland in safety.

Buried battle sword

Yet another strange event concerned the sword of Fierbois. When she was being equipped to join the Dauphin's armies, Joan said that her battle sword would be found buried behind the altar at St Catherine's Church at Fierbois. The sword was searched for and found, even though no one knew previously of the existence of any such sword. Joan seemed at least to have some inexplicable sixth sense, if not actual psychic powers.

Another incident concerned the gloves distributed as gifts at Charles's coronation. One recipient of a pair of these gloves quickly lost them, and asked Joan to help him find them. By the time of Joan's trial, this story had been so distorted that the Maid was said to have stolen the new king's own gloves, and subsequently used them in her sorceries.

Joan's refusal to repeat the Lord's Prayer at her trial was also taken as an indication that she was a witch. At that time it was a common belief that no witch could say the Lord's Prayer without faltering: had Joan inadvertently stumbled over the words, she would have seemed condemned out of her own mouth.

Some of Joan's colleagues and acquaintances had also harmed her reputation. The known satanist Gilles de Rais was a captain in the Dauphin's army at Orléans. Gilles was a nobleman, a famous soldier, a devil worshipper and a notorious mass-murderer of children (see page 1586). But his pathological crimes took place after Joan's death, and there is no evidence to suggest that he and Joan were close friends.

Another dangerous ally for the Maid was the Franciscan friar, Brother Richard, whom she had first met at Troyes in July 1429. At

her trial she described how she countered his first overtures with some wit: 'When he came to me . . . he made the sign of the cross, and threw holy water, and I said to him: "Approach boldly – I will not fly away."'

Brother Richard was already a controversial figure for a series of sermons he had been preaching in Paris on the subject of the imminent coming of the Antichrist. Joan and he quickly established a religious rapport, and he became one of her confessors and her standard-bearer at Charles's exhausting coronation. But he encouraged Joan in her deviations from religious orthodoxy, and

Below: Joan's trial, from the 16th-century 'Armagnac manuscript'. The trial lasted five months and was presided over by Pierre Cauchon, bishop of Beauvais (an English sympathiser) and Jean Le Maître, deputy inquisitor. After Joan had recanted of her 'crimes' she was condemned to perpetual imprisonment; when she relapsed, she was burnt at the stake

made extravagant claims for her that did not help her image:

> [She] had as much power to know God's secrets as any saint in paradise . . . and . . . she could, if she wanted, make the King's army enter over the walls in any way she wanted.

Eventually there was a rift in their relationship, but the damage had been done; the friar's sensational sermons and unsavoury sorcerer's image inevitably tainted Joan's reputation.

The Maid's apparent lack of sexual identity also led to speculation as to whether she was in fact a girl. During her lifetime Joan was examined three times to verify either her sex or her virginity: the evidence was that she was both female and *virgo intacta*. But psychologically at least she seemed to suffer from some confusion as to her sexual role. Her choice of male clothing was, she said, guided by her voices; but she certainly seemed to feel more comfortable in male dress, and opulent male dress at that. However it also has to be said that dressing like a man encouraged her soldiers to think of her as a comrade in arms; and it would have been impossible for her to ride astride in skirts.

Witch or not, Joan of Arc was condemned and, supposedly, burnt at the stake. But there is a theory that she escaped execution, and that a *bona fide* witch was burnt in her place. Several 'Joans' appeared in the years following her execution, the most convincing of whom was one who turned up in Orléans on 28 July 1439 and lodged there for a few days under the name of the Dame des Armoises. She recieved a payment for her past deeds on behalf of the city, and was apparently acknowledged by both Joan's brother and the king as the real Maid.

However most contemporary chroniclers took the Dame des Armoises's claim with a pinch of salt; and in 1457 it was reported that she was released from prison 'having long called herself Jeanne la Pucelle, and deceived many persons who had seen Jeanne at the siege of Orléans.' She was never heard of again.

The false Joan had fuelled speculation that the Maid might have been saved from the stake by order of the English regent, the Duke of Bedford, because she was of royal descent. The rumour was that she was the illegitimate daughter of the promiscuous Queen Isabella (the Dauphin's mother) and Louis, Duke of Orléans. Unfortunately for this romantic myth the Duke had died years before Joan was born.

But the story of Joan of Arc is fantastic enough without being embroidered with novelettish yarns. That a simple country girl should so seize the imagination of a monarch, an army and a people, and lead them to triumph is scarcely credible: the knowledge of what really inspired Joan of Arc almost certainly perished with her in the fire.

Right: in a scene from the film *Saint Joan* (1957) Joan (played by Jean Seberg) hears the sentence of the court. A friar (played by Kenneth Haigh) kneels beside her as she prays for strength

Further reading

John Holland Smith, *Joan of Arc*, Sidgwick and Jackson 1973
Edward Lucie-Smith, *Joan of Arc*, Allen Lane 1976
W. S. Scott, *Jeanne d'Arc*, Harrap 1974

New teet

For most people a visit to the dentist means stark waiting rooms, the sound of the electric drill and the taste of antiseptic mouthwash. But for Willard Fuller's patients, things are different, as ROY STEMMAN reports

OF ALL THE HEALING GIFTS, that of psychic dentistry is surely the most bizarre, and the most difficult to explain. The few mediums who practise it are said to be able to mend bad teeth instantly with gold, silver or porcelain fillings that materialise in their patients' mouths. Sometimes, it is claimed, new teeth grow where previously there had been only blackened stumps.

Such astonishing statements have their share of critics; even many believers in the paranormal treat psychic dentistry with some suspicion. But few who have witnessed evangelist Willard Fuller at work remain sceptical. Since he began in 1960 he is said to have produced 'mouth miracles' in over 25,000 patients.

Fuller, a tall, bearded American, graduated in business administration and gained a degree in electrical engineering before the Baptist Church beckoned. Then, with another degree, this time in theology, under his belt, he set out to travel across the United States. For 10 years he preached as an evangelist for the Baptist Church.

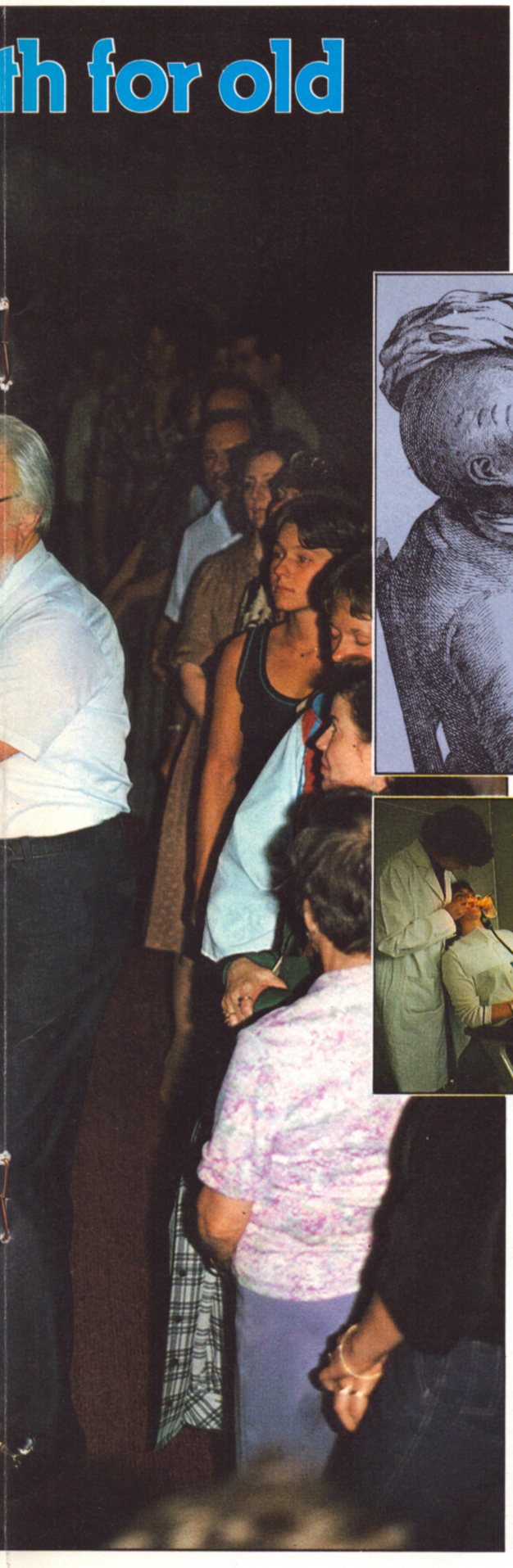
Two things then happened that were to alter his life radically: he was excommunicated – he says, for asking too many questions – and, at about the same time, he went through what the old-time Pentacostalists called a 'baptism of the Holy Spirit'. Shortly afterwards, in response to his calling, he embarked on a healing mission.

To begin with he practised spiritual healing no different from any other. But what started out as simply the laying on of hands was to develop into something quite extraordinary when Fuller met up with A. C. McKaig. Fuller already knew of this man who prayed for people's 'dental needs' with the result that their cavities were miraculously filled. So, when he heard that McKaig was preaching in Shreveport, Louisiana, he had no hesitation in going along to witness the service for himself.

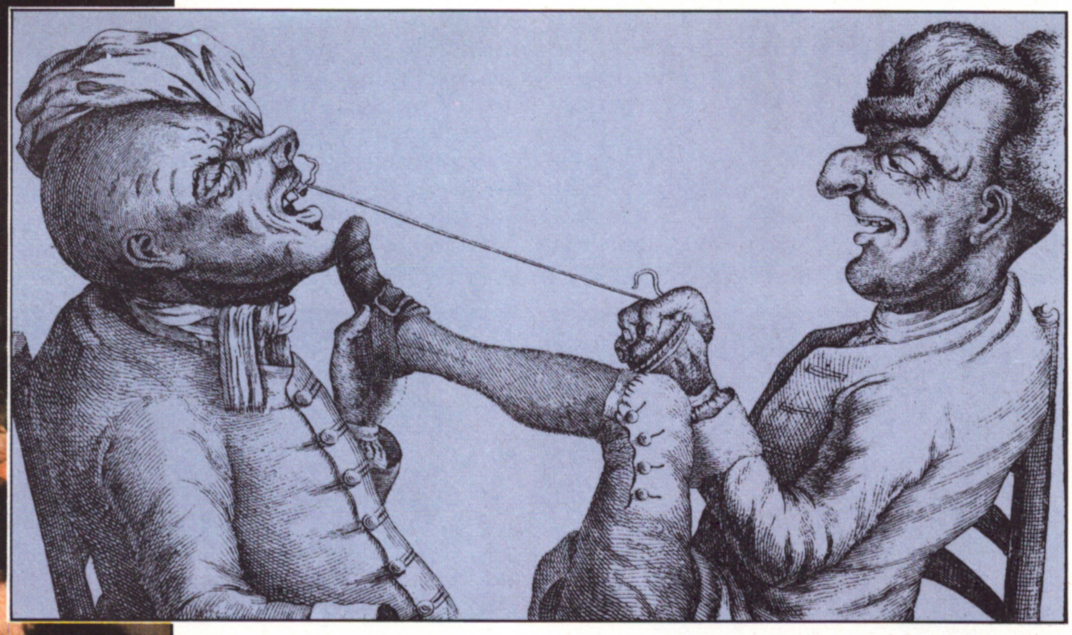
Fuller watched with growing excitement as the healer treated a variety of illnesses – but the best was yet to come, for McKaig had saved his dental treatments until last. One of the people in the audience was a woman who had never visited a dentist in her life. She had a cavity that badly needed attention. Fuller watched as McKaig placed his hands on the woman's head and prayed for God to help her. The healer then gave her a torch and a hand-mirror so she could look inside her own mouth. As she examined her tooth she gave a shriek of delight. 'It has silver in it!' she shouted. Fuller was standing nearby. He rushed over to the woman and peered at the filled tooth. 'It was bright, shiny and looking like a newly-minted coin,' he declared.

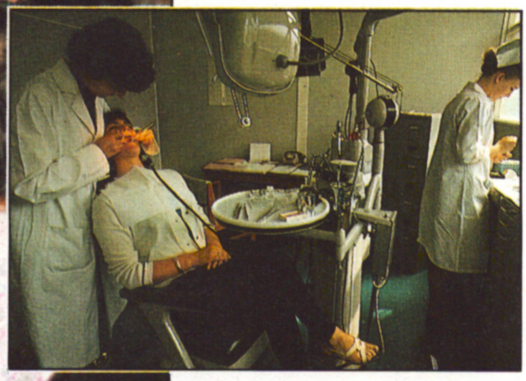
Below: the Reverend A. C. McKaig, Willard Fuller's mentor and the man who first introduced him to the idea of praying for people's 'dental needs'

th for old



Below: an 18th-century drawing showing a tooth being pulled and the patient's neck being simultaneously put out of joint. Although things have, fortunately, changed since then, a visit to a modern dentist's surgery (bottom) can still fill many people with terror





People queue up to see Willard Fuller who is shown here (left) in action. His technique involves smacking the patient on both cheeks: the only painful part of an otherwise pain-free experience

More such 'miracles' were to follow as McKaig treated a stream of people, but one of the strangest happenings was reserved for Fuller himself. Abruptly McKaig turned to him, pointed and announced, 'Now I am going to pray for you and ask God to bless you.' The healer was a small man and he had to mount a two-step platform in order to be at Fuller's height. The scene may have, indeed, looked incongruous but the results were apparently immediate and dramatic.

God, says Fuller, spoke to him in the following words, words he has never forgotten: 'Think it not strange, my son, all the things that thou has seen me do through him, this, my servant. For all the things that thou hast seen me do through him. I shall do through thee, and greater things I shall do through thee than thou hast seen me do through him.'

It may sound as if God could do with a better scriptwriter, but it was enough to inspire Fuller and set him on the road to psychic dentistry.

He admits that it took some time before he found the courage to introduce it into his own healing services. Would it work for him the way it had worked for his mentor? When he finally met the challenge, by treating a young man for a cavity, he was overjoyed to discover that he did possess the power to heal. Since that first tentative beginning Fuller hasn't looked back. He divides his results into two categories: 'miracles', which are meant to have instantaneous results, and 'healings', which can take up to a few days before they are complete.

Bryce Bond, an American writer and healer, witnessed the psychic dentist at work in 1979. He explains: 'Fuller's technique is simple. He gently smacks the person on both cheeks at the same time and says, "In the name of Jesus, be thou whole."' It is believed possible that that moment of intense belief is able to produce a spiritual alchemy in which

gold, silver or porcelain take shape inside the patients' mouths. It may seem unlikely, but there are many prepared to testify that they have seen it taking place.

Those who have witnessed a filling form describe it as a small, bright spot that becomes larger until it fills the whole cavity – rather like a speeded-up picture of a rose blooming. The British psychic Matthew Manning endorses this description. He attended one of Fuller's healing sessions in New York in early 1979. Manning was cynical to begin with but, once he had witnessed the phenomenon at first-hand, he felt convinced enough to declare the treatment 'absolutely genuine'. He reported what he saw to *Psychic News* (24 March 1979): 'One woman had at the back of her jaw a very decayed tooth which was black. I saw it fill with something white which appeared to be a kind of ceramic substance. When finished, she had a new white tooth. Several people were peering into the woman's mouth. The substance came from her gum. I saw this happen.'

Few doctors, however, are prepared to take Fuller's claims seriously, though some have witnessed his sessions for themselves. Scientists employed by NASA at Cape Kennedy were among a group who received dental healings during a meeting in Miami, Florida, and doctors were present among the 400 witnesses who attended a demonstration at Wagner College, Staten Island, New York, in 1979. One Swedish doctor has been prepared to speak out. Dr Audrey Kargere from the Humanist College, Stockholm, was 'highly elated' when several of her silver fillings were transformed to gold. She also benefited from Fuller's more conventional healing, which resulted in her badly swollen leg returning to normal very rapidly. Peter Williams was another doctor at the same session. He was said to have been delighted, but baffled, when a blackened tooth was transformed to 'bright, shiny gold'.

According to Bryce Bond it is not necessary to ask for Fuller's help to benefit from the healing, it is enough to be present at one of the meetings. During the 1979 session he attended he did not volunteer for psychic dentistry. Despite this, throughout the meeting, he was aware of tingling in his gums followed by numbness. Later he discovered small pieces of tartar (the hard chalky deposit that the dentist scrapes off during a routine clean up) had become dislodged. He was able to pick the small granules off his tongue.

Ruby, platinum and gold

Apart from the claims that silver fillings have turned to gold, less conventional materials have sometimes been said to fill the cavities. Some witnesses claim seeing teeth filled with a translucent ruby-like substance; others talk of a platinum-coloured metal being used. Neither substance has been subjected to scientific analysis.

Some of the gold, however, has been analysed and is reported to be purer that that

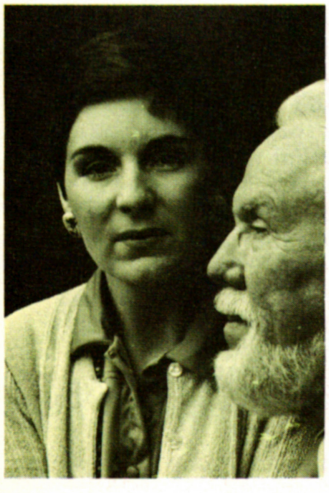
Left: another satisfied customer? Fuller shines a torch into a patient's mouth while the patient examines his new 'miracle' filling. Fuller's wife, looking on, seems as surprised as anyone

Fuller uses none of the paraphernalia of the modern dentist; he carries the tools of his trade around with him. A look inside his briefcase (below) reveals that his only concession to technology is a battery for his torch

normally used for dental work. Furthermore, it is claimed that it has the appearance of having been poured into cavities while still molten – though if this had actually been the case Fuller would have had his patients writhing in agony. In fact, a visit to a psychic dentist is purported to be an, uncharacteristically, pain-free experience.

So why has Fuller's mediumship not shaken up the dental and medical professions and provided parapsychologists with irrefutable evidence of psychic phenomena? One reason is that it does not always work; Fuller cannot guarantee that his healing ministry will produce results. Another is that, although many dentists and scientists have witnessed Fuller's 'miracles', most refuse to allow their names to be used with their testimonies. An unwillingness to put their reputations on the line by being associated with such treatments, professional jealousy even, are possible reasons for reticence.

Right: Paul Esch, another psychic dentist, likes to start his healing sessions with a little music. It was Fuller who took Esch under his wing. Now the young man conducts services on his own, clocking up 'mouth miracles' wherever he goes



A deeply rooted faith

One of Fuller's most extraordinary success stories concerns a 66-year-old woman who had none of her own teeth but whose problem was that her false teeth were too loose. Fuller treated her, and almost immediately her dental plate felt much tighter. Next day, however, she called him in despair: the plate had grown so tight it was uncomfortable. Fuller could not understand what was happening but he reassured her that God would make everything turn out all right. But the woman called again the following day to say that now the plate did not fit at all. Puzzled, Fuller still insisted that she have faith.

Twenty four hours later the reason for the problem was revealed when Fuller received another call from the woman. 'I know why my plates don't fit. I'm cutting new teeth like a baby,' she explained. Within 17 days, it was reported, she had 32 new, perfect teeth, which had grown to full maturity.

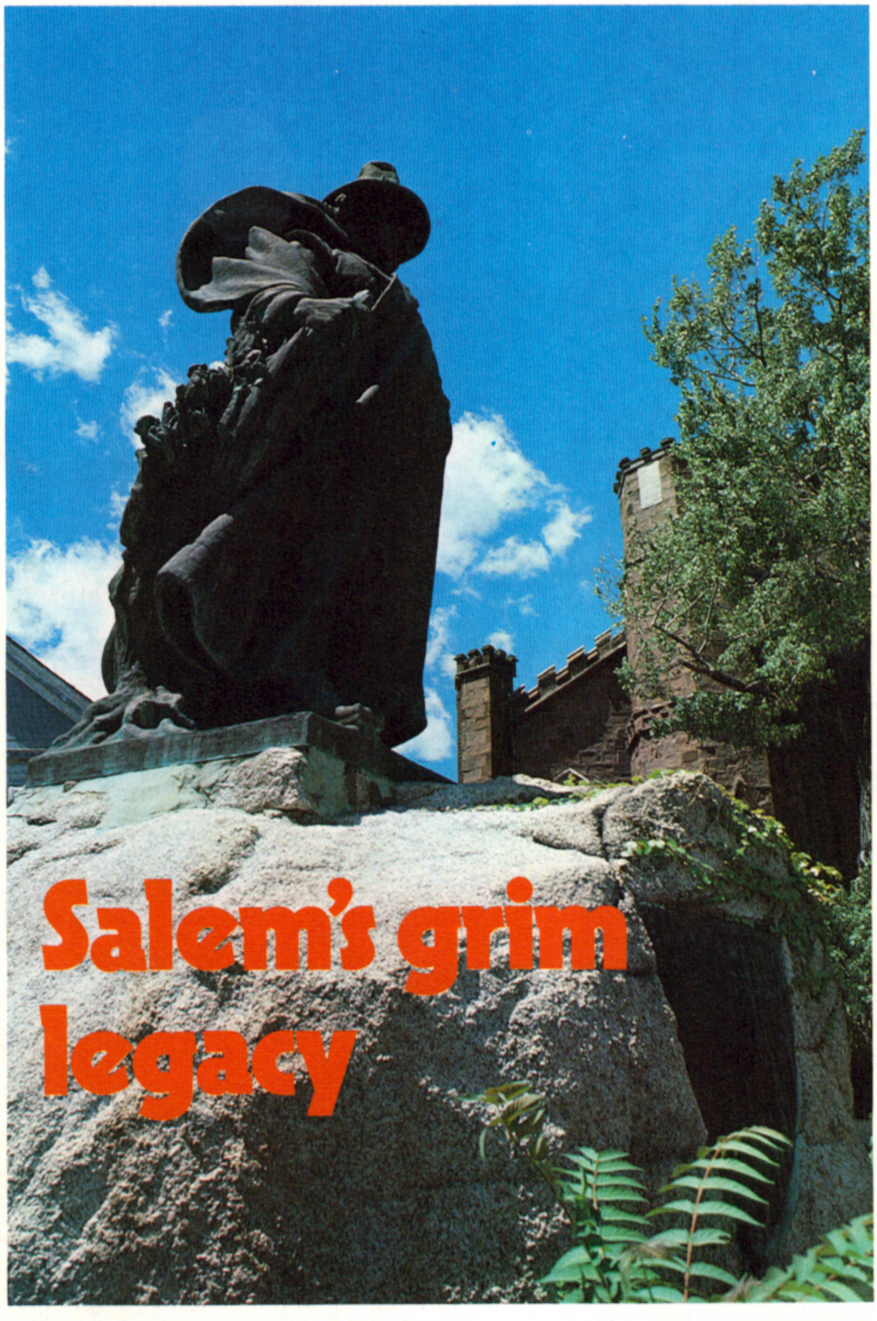
Of course, the fact that new teeth are occasionally said to grow is a chance for believers to provide convincing and tangible evidence for the paranormal. Teeth are, after all, measurable quantities, as are fillings. A comparison of x-rays before and after treatment by a psychic dentist should be able to prove beyond doubt whether or not a paranormal event has occurred. So far the orthodox medical profession has shown itself uninterested in carrying out such a study. Despite the numerous testimonials, some from within branches of the establishment, the conventional view remains one of scepticism. Certainly at the present time, anyone seeking a scientific explanation is likely to be disappointed. Results are said to be dependent largely on the patient's faith in the medium's powers and, so far, all documented evidence is circumstantial. Fuller himself is not interested in taking up the challenge to prove the efficacy of his treatments, neither is he interested in speculative explanations for them. He, like many healers, is happy just to carry on treating people. His powers he puts down to God.

Fuller did take some time off from his ministry to train another psychic dentist, Paul Esch. Fuller and his wife, a graduate psychologist who helps him in his work, invited the young Esch to join them in 1968. Esch knew from the outset of his involvement with the Fullers that his own future lay in psychic dentistry.

Above left: Fuller with his graduate psychologist wife Margaret. She accompanies him on his healing missions and is committed to his work. Were Fuller to set up in private practice today he would be a wealthy man, but both agree he should continue to give his services free in order, Fuller says, to prove God's extraordinary powers. Whether anyone will be able to prove or disprove Fuller's powers remains to be seen

Bryce Bond has investigated Paul Esch's abilities and he describes what he saw of the young man's skills as nothing short of 'a miracle'. Of the meeting he attended in Woodstock, New York – a year before he encountered Fuller – Bond says: 'One of those present had a few empty spaces in her mouth, she tasted blood, then a tooth broke through the surface of the empty gum. Almost all those present noticed their teeth became whiter.'

Apparently certain members of the group received two or three gold fillings. The sessions are very similar to Fuller's. Bond goes on to say: 'The only way to believe it is to see it happen first-hand.' Perhaps he should have also added that the only way to see it happen is to believe it could happen, since Fuller maintains that faith plays not a small part in the healing process.



Salem's grim legacy

By the time the witch hunt of Salem had run its course, whole families had been ruined and the very name of the village had become synonymous with mindless persecution. But, asks FRANK SMYTH, were all of the accused totally innocent?

ON 20 APRIL 1692, 12-year-old Ann Putnam saw the apparition of a Puritan minister who half strangled her. Ann, one of the 'bewitched' girls of Salem Village, Massachusetts, USA, asked her ghostly tormentor who he was. Obligingly, he told her: he was the Rev. George Burroughs, who had been minister at the village between 1680 and 1682 – when Ann was two years old.

'She was greviously affrighted,' according to evidence presented to the witchcraft court, 'and cried out, "Oh dreadful, dreadful. Here is a minister come. What, are ministers witches too?"'

In this case, the court decided, George Burroughs was, indeed, a witch. He was recalled from the village in Maine where he held his present living, and brought back to Salem to answer the charges against him. To Judge John Hathorne, Burroughs's position in the community made him an obvious leader of the oddly assorted collection of 'witches' already arrested. Burroughs, a short, stocky man, had been suspected by popular gossip of doing away with both his wives while minister at Salem. Now Ann Putnam confirmed the rumours; she had seen the wraiths of the two women, she said, and they told her that they had been victims of their husband's witchcraft.

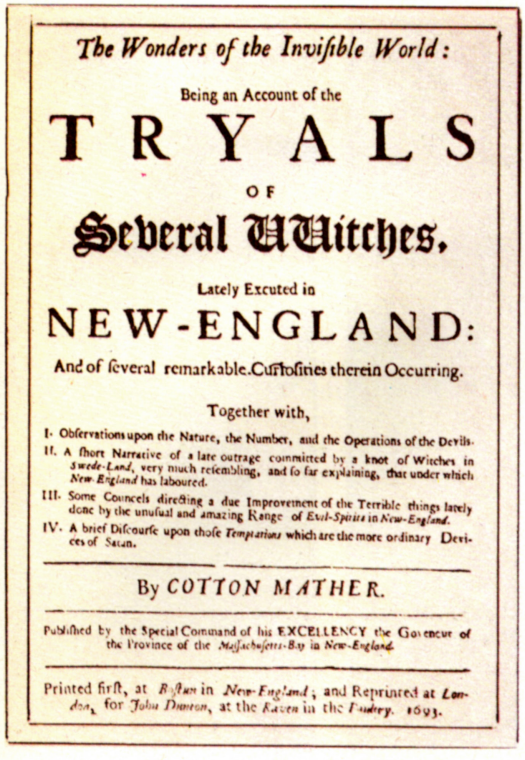
Devilish eavesdropping?

Goodman Ruck, Burroughs's former brother-in-law, told the court that on one occasion, when he and his sister and Burroughs had been out picking strawberries, the minister had left them for a while and had rejoined them further along the road, when he was able to repeat the conversation they had had in his absence. When they expressed surprise, Burroughs had told them: 'My God makes known your thoughts unto me' – by which, Ruck explained, he meant the Devil.

Unfortunately for Burroughs, he was apparently in the habit of hiding, listening to conversations, and then reporting them verbatim to his astonished listeners – not a trick liable to endear him to the hysterical inhabitants of Salem.

Despite his small stature his broad shoulders gave Burroughs enormous strength, which he had used to impress the community. There is evidence to suggest that he used tricks to enhance his strong-arm reputation, appearing to lift a 7-foot (2-metre) musket simply by inserting his forefinger in the barrel, for instance, and picking up a

Two modern reminders of Salem's notorious history: the brooding figure of a black-clad Puritan (above left) and the post office's 'witch city' sign (left), representing between them the present inhabitants' awareness of their past – and its commercial potential today



The Wonders of the Invisible World:

Being an Account of the

TRYALS

OF

Several Witches,

Lately Excuted in

NEW-ENGLAND:

And of several remarkable Curiosities therein Occurring.

Together with,

I. Observations upon the Nature, the Number, and the Operations of the Devils.

II. A short Narrative of a late outrage committed by a knot of Witches in *Swede-Land*, very much resembling, and so far explaining, that under which *New-England* has laboured.

III. Some Councels directing a due Improvement of the Terrible things lately done by the unusual and amazing Range of *Evil-Spirits* in *New-England*.

IV. A brief Discourse upon those *Temptations* which are the more ordinary Devices of Satan.

By *COTTON MATHER.*

Published by the Special Command of his EXCELLENCY the Governour of the Province of the *Massachusetts-Bay* in *New-England*.

Printed first, at *Boston* in *New-England*; and Reprinted at *London*, for *John Dunton*, at the *Raven* in the *Poultry*. 1693.

The Rev. Cotton Mather's best-selling account of the Salem 'witch' trials, promising the reader a description of the works of an 'unusual and amazing range of evil spirits in New England'

barrel of molasses between finger and thumb. The magistrates, however, took these tales as evidence of real supernatural power, and when it was 'revealed' that Burroughs had made his wives sign oaths of secrecy about his exploits, he was finished.

For although some of those who had confessed so far – Tituba, for instance, and Dorcas Good – were spared, for others the enquiry had become a hanging matter. On 27 May Governor William Phips who, assisted by the Rev. Increase Mather, had been negotiating a new charter for Massachusetts, turned away from more pressing business to establish a special Court of Oyer and Terminer. These courts, abolished in 1972, were set up especially by Royal Commission to enquire into serious criminal matters. Phips appointed the cream of New England judges – who, acting on the written advice of Cotton Mather – tended towards leniency at first. Mather stressed that 'it is better that ten witches go free than that one innocent person be convicted'; but on 10 June the court claimed its first victim, Bridget Bishop.

On 19 July the malicious Sarah Good, the innocent Rebecca Nurse, and three other women followed her to the gallows. As she climbed the gallows steps, Sarah Good made a prediction that some were to think, in retrospect, proved her guilt. When the Rev. Nicholas Noyes asked her to repent of her witchcraft, she cried out: 'You are a liar. I am no more a witch than you are a wizard, and if you take away my life, God will give you blood to drink.' A quarter of a century later Noyes suffered a massive lung haemorrhage and choked on his own blood. Judge Hathorne's great-great-grandson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, used the incident in his novel *The house of the seven gables.*

On 19 August five more people, including the Rev. George Burroughs and the whip-wielding farmer John Proctor, were hanged on Gallows Hill. Burroughs made a good impression on the crowd by reciting the Lord's Prayer perfectly – something no witch was supposed to be able to do. But Cotton Mather addressed the spectators from horseback, maintaining that the Devil could appear as 'an angel of light'. This move, more than his repeated appeals for leniency and common sense, blackened Mather's name for posterity. But he had recommended that Proctor's wife Elizabeth be spared. She had been condemned to death with him, but was allowed to 'plead her belly' – she was pregnant – and was later released.

In September came one of the bravest stands against the increasing madness of the court. Giles Corey, husband of Martha Corey, refused to recognise the impartiality of his judges, and was thus subjected to *peine forte et dure* – pressing with heavy weights – to make him answer the charges. He died after two days of this torture on 19 September, still silent. 'His tongue being pressed

The flight of witches to an unholy sabbat. At Salem, Tituba the slave declared that there was indeed a local coven – but was this mere fantasy, or were there really witches at Salem?

Top: the House of Seven Gables in Salem today, the setting for Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel of the same name. Hawthorne was a direct descendant of Judge Hathorne, a central character in the witch hunt

Top right: Lori Cabot, lecturer in witchcraft at the modern Salem State College

Above: the Rev. George Burroughs, hanged as a witch at Salem. His unorthodox habits and interest in diabolism made his execution certain

out of his mouth,' recorded one contemporary, 'the sherriff with his cane forced it in again when he was dying.'

A rather less dramatic stand had been taken by Captain John Alden of Boston, who had been accused by the demented girls while on a visit to Salem. He stood in court, 'a bold fellow with his hat on before the judges', and it was said that he 'sells powder and shot to the Indians and the French, and lies with the Indian squaws and has Indian papooses'. When one of the magistrates, Bartholomew Gedney, remarked how the witnesses fell down when Alden looked on them, Alden asked 'what reason there could be given why Alden's looking upon *him* did not strike *him* down as well, but no reason was given. . . .'

Alden later escaped from jail and made his way to New York, returning when the witch hunt was over. But eight more people, including Martha Corey and the 'wise woman' Mammy Redd, were executed on 22 September. By now an air of black farce was creeping in; one man, for instance, was accused of 'firing a mare's fart' by sticking a lighted tobacco pipe up its anus in order to relieve the belly ache. When the girls were taken to Andover – a small town quieter, if anything, than even Salem Village had been previously – they claimed that 'there were forty men in it that could raise the Devil as well as any astrologer. . . .'

In fact over 50 people were 'complained of' in Andover, and when the local magistrate Dudley Bradstreet had signed 'thirty or forty warrants' he came to his senses and refused to grant more; predictably he and his wife were immediately accused, and fled to New Hampshire. Bradstreet's brother John was also forced to flee; his dog was therefore executed instead.

Cotton Mather's prediction that 'worthy people' would be caught up in the general panic was gradually coming true. One Boston merchant threatened to sue his accusers to the tune of £1000, upon which the charges were promptly dropped; other people 'accused' but not proceeded against included Judge Nathaniel Saltonstall, who had resigned from the court in protest at its inhumanity, Phillip English, a relative of Judge Hathorne, and the mother-in-law of Judge Corwin – a lady named Mrs Margaret Thatcher.

The end of the madness

Increase and Cotton Mather renewed their protest at the admission of 'spectral evidence', and by late summer 'excepting Mr Hales, Mr Noyse, and Mr Parris, the Reverend Elders throughout the country [were] very much dissatisfied.' On 29 October the clergy, led by Increase Mather, presented a bill before the General Court of Massachusetts in Boston calling for the dismissal of the Court of Oyer and Terminer. The bill also called for a 'fast day' that they 'might be led in the right way towards the witchcrafts'. The witch hunt was over.

Then began the recriminations and the allocation of blame. After a long argument in Council, the Rev. Parris was dismissed from the Salem Village living in 1697, on the grounds that he had been 'the beginner and procurer' of the trouble by publicising the girls' 'possession' in the first place.

The excommunications of several church members, including Martha Corey and Rebecca Nurse, were posthumously lifted, while survivors such as Elizabeth Proctor,

who because of their sentences had been unable to possess the property of their executed relatives, were compensated by the court. But the heartbreak suffered by many in the community was not to be lifted so easily. One petition, sent to the General Court set up in 1710 to investigate, speaks for many:

> My wife . . . was in prison about four months and then executed. A sucking child died in prison before the mother's execution. A child of four or five . . . was in prison seven or eight months, and being chained in the dungeon was so hardly used and terrified that she hath ever since been very chargeable, having little or no reason to govern herself. And I leave it unto the honorable Court to judge what damage I have sustained by such a destruction of my poor family. . . .

A crying shame

Seven women, including Bridget Bishop and Mammy Redd, never did receive a reversal of their attainders – a pardon. The nearest their descendants got was in a resolution by the General Court of Massachusetts in 1957 to the effect that

> Whereas . . . certain descendants . . . are still distressed by the record of said proceedings [the witchcraft trials] . . . the General Court of Massachusetts declares its belief that such proceedings . . . were and are shocking . . . and as all the laws under which said proceedings, even if then legally conducted, have been long since abandoned and superceded by our more civilized laws, no disgrace or cause for distress attached to the said descendants. . . .

There were undoubtedly strange things going on at Salem. The 'seance' that first set the girls off into pathological hysteria has exact parallels in well-attested modern cases.

Above: Senator Joe McCarthy, whose anti-Communist mania assumed an hysteria reminiscent of that of the Salem witch hunt. Among his many victims was Charlie Chaplin (right), whose career suffered a severe setback because of McCarthy's campaign – although he was innocent. Another victim was writer Arthur Miller, whose play *The crucible* (below), which was based on the Salem trials, contained thinly veiled references to McCarthy

Further reading

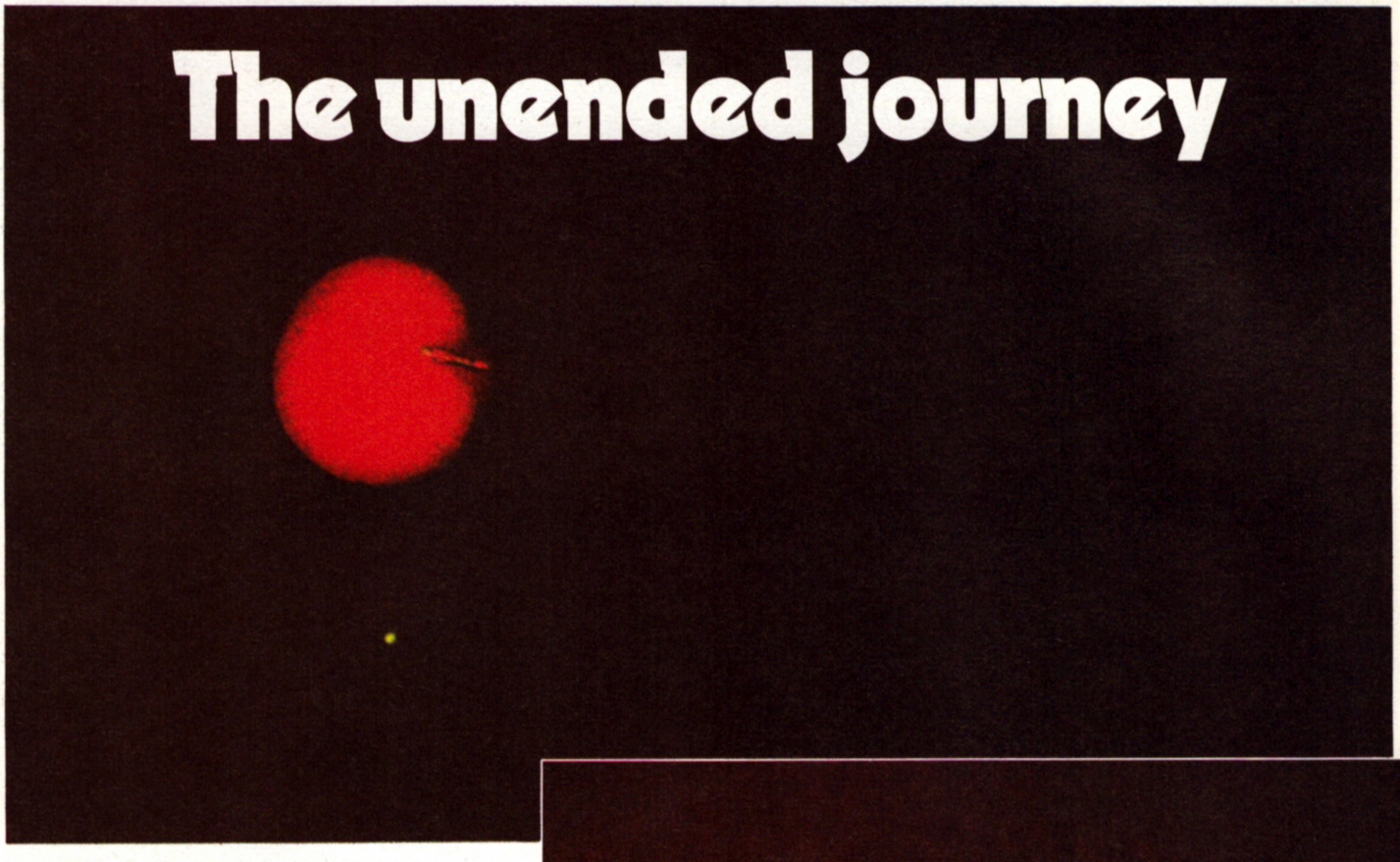
Chadwick Hansen, *Witchcraft at Salem*, Hutchinson 1970
David Levin (ed.) *What happened at Salem?*, Harcourt (New York) 1960
Frank Smyth, *Modern witchcraft*, Macdonald 1970

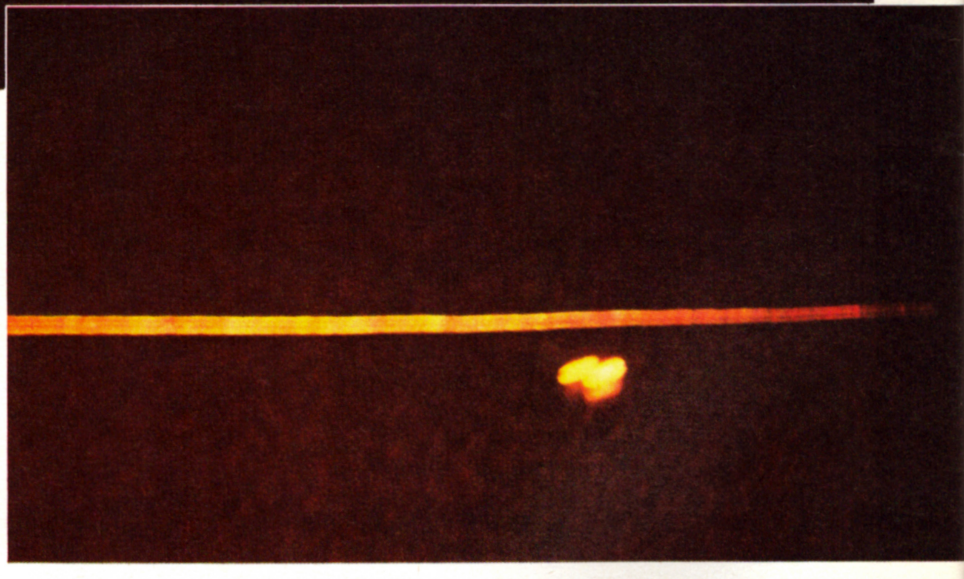
The evidence of Tituba, the Carib Indian slave, when taken as a whole seems to indicate that she had at least some of the characteristics of an excellent medium.

The Rev. George Burroughs, trickery apart, did have a deep knowledge of diabolism, and behaved very oddly for a Puritan minister: he admitted that he had not taken communion for years, and only the eldest of his children had been baptised. And there can be little doubt about the efficacy of at least some of the spells cast by the many 'village wise women' who had been called before the Salem courts. Anthropologists have shown repeatedly that witchcraft works in societies that believe in it.

But the blind and mindless horror brought down by otherwise benevolent men on their own people, swiftly followed by apparently sincere shame and repentance for what they had done, is of a deeper order entirely. When the anti-Communist 'witch hunts' of the McCarthyite 1950s were seen in retrospect to compare so closely with the events in Salem Village, it seemed that Man's own devilish power to wreak havoc among the virtuous had not diminished with the passing of time.

The unended journey





The most famous of UFO close encounters, the alleged abduction of Betty and Barney Hill, continues even today. HILARY EVANS describes the subsequent extraordinary experiences in which Betty has been involved, and explores the psychological roots of the case

NOT LONG AFTER her UFO encounter, Betty Hill came home to find leaves piled inexplicably on her kitchen table. Among them were the ear-rings she had been wearing at the time of the sighting. Stranger and stranger incidents occurred over the years. There were unaccountable noises around the house, and remarkable things happened to appliances: wires pulled out of a central heating pump, a burglar alarm tripped off inexplicably, faults developed in electrical equipment such as the refrigerator, toaster, iron, radio set and television set, which just as strangely managed to right themselves. Betty finally claimed that her telephone had been tapped both by the Air Force and by some organisation calling itself the 'Federal Agency'. Her mail disappeared; she saw and heard prowlers; and she was visited by all kinds of strangers.

While for some of this there is external confirmation – neighbours did indeed see prowlers round Betty's home – most of it depends on her own personal affirmation. However, in connection with another of her claims she welcomed other witnesses: this was her UFO hunting, which she does several nights a week, whether with visitors or alone. She told the ufologist Allan Hendry that she often saw as many as 50 to 100 UFOs a night in a 'special area' in New Hampshire. In an interview she told of a particular incident:

> One particular UFO comes in almost every night. During the winter of 1976–1977, when I saw it often, it was quite spectacular – a sort of flattened disc with brightly coloured lights. One night in January 1977 it landed and turned on twelve big white lights around the rim. Under them there were two white headlights. I was out there one night with a retired military officer and his wife. When he saw the UFO, he got out of the car and started walking

Aliens in jackboots

At many points in the transcript of the hypnotic sessions, the latent fears of Barney (right) come to the surface. While recalling watching the light in the sky, he says: 'Betty! This is not a flying saucer. What are you doing this for? You want to believe in this thing, and I don't.' And a little later: 'I want to hear a *jet*. Oh, I want to hear a jet so *badly*. I want to hear it.' When the object is close enough to appear like 'a big pancake, with rows of windows', he says: 'Can't somebody come? Can't somebody come and *tell* me this is not there?' One of the men on board looks friendly, and 'I think of – a red-headed Irishman . . . because Irishmen are usually hostile to Negroes. And when I see a friendly Irish person, I react to him by thinking – *I* will be friendly.' But another figure has an evil face: 'He looks like a German Nazi. He's a Nazi. . . .'

Not surprisingly, considering he is black, Barney has a fit of terror: 'His *eyes*! His *eyes*. I've never seen eyes like that before.' But after the abduction experience, when he is driving homeward, his former attitude returns: Betty asks him if he believes in flying saucers now, and he replies: 'Oh, Betty, don't be ridiculous. Of course I don't. . . .'

'A huge red ball, filmed coming straight down from the sky' (above left) and a 'double cylinder travelling along a beam' (left) – these are Betty Hill's descriptions of these objects, which she filmed with a Super 8 movie camera in New Hampshire, not far from where she lives

towards it. Suddenly a large swirling mass shot out from the object. I don't know what it was, but it looked like a red ball rolling over and over and heading directly toward him. I jumped out and tried to film this with my movie camera. But then – I know this sounds incredible – a green light hit my camera and burned out the switch and the circuitry so my camera wouldn't work. When the officer saw this red ball coming at him, he turned and ran back to the car. The red ball stopped, rolled back to the craft, and disappeared.

But Hendry notes that 'a number of UFO field investigators have accompanied Mrs Hill to her special site, only to confirm that the lights in the night sky that Mrs Hill calls UFOs are only planes and streetlights', comments that others have confirmed; and he points out that 'she also related other tales involving robots, her neighbour's cat levitating, and a "militant" UFO that burned the paint on her car when she didn't leave the area soon enough to suit them.'

Left: Betty Hill reports frequent paranormal experiences and several sightings of UFOs each week. Sometimes investigators have accompanied her – and have reported that she misidentifies aircraft and street lights. She believes, however, that she has found a UFO landing site in New Hampshire and that this accounts for the fact that she sees so many strange aerial objects

While it is fair to say that these bizarre incidents may be a *consequence* of her original experience, and do not therefore invalidate that experience, they cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. In a case that depends entirely on personal testimony, we must know just what kind of person is making the testimony. Psychology, not astronomy, will best help us to understand the Hill case.

We should note that the Hills' story contains many incongruous or inconsistent features. It is not clear, for example, whether Betty is communicating with the aliens in speech or by telepathy: sometimes one is suggested, sometimes the other. In either case, the way the 'leader' used colloquial English is surprising in view of the ignorance they display in some matters – such as what 'yellow' is, or what is meant by a 'year'.

An example of seeming inconsistency is afforded by the Hills' statement that, in being abducted, they walked – apparently for some distance – through the woods with their abductors before reaching the clearing where the UFO was parked, whereas after the examination they were soon back at their car, from which they were able to watch the UFO's departure. Such details are not particularly important in themselves, but they serve to remind us that the Hills' story is by no means a precisely detailed and watertight narrative.

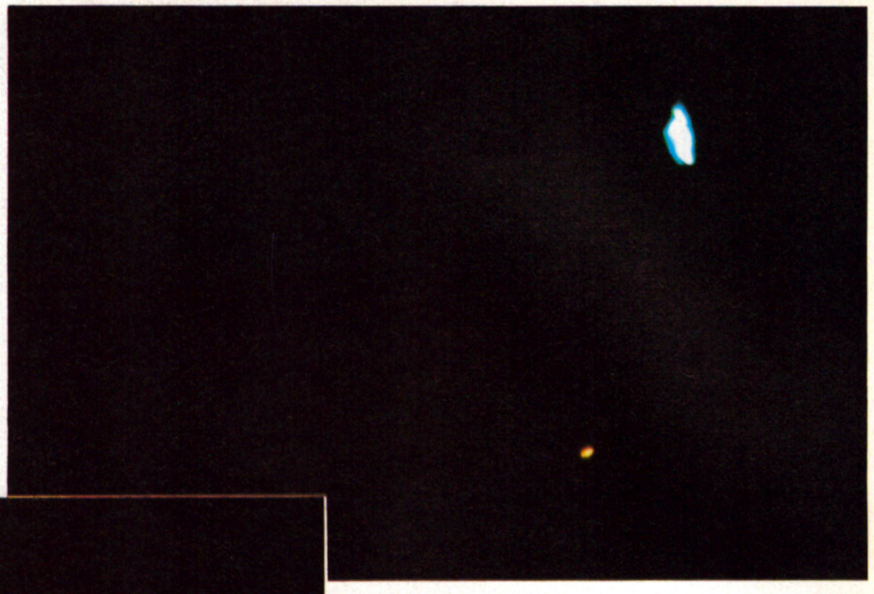
Sources of stress

In our search for an explanation, let us look at the Hills' psychological history. Barney's health deteriorated during the year following the sighting, but it was by no means perfect before it. Barney did not develop an ulcer in 1962 – the ulcer he already had grew worse. And an ulcer is notoriously the physical expression of psychological disturbance, usually stress. We have noted that both the Hills had had previous marriages and were separated from the children of those marriages; and, although their present marriage was to all appearance a happy one, it was none the less an inter-racial marriage in a society in which this was exceptional, and it remained a potential source of stress. Betty was involved in child welfare work, while Barney worked at nights, commuting 120 miles (200 kilometres) a day, and was involved in civil rights work: both these occupations were liable to produce anxiety.

Further, Betty had a history of psychic

experiences: she believed that psychic abilities were common in her family and that she herself had had traumatic precognitive dreams as a teenager. Curiously, this ability was shared by her adopted daughter. 'Actually,' Betty told Dr Berthold Schwarz, a psychologist with a close interest in UFOs, 'all my close family members have witnessed UFO sightings: my parents, my sisters and brothers, my nieces and nephews.' Poltergeist incidents of the type that occurred in the Hill household after the sighting were commonplace in her childhood home, where they were attributed to a 'ghost' named Hannah.

How does all this relate to their UFO sighting? Schwarz offers one possibility:



Two more of Betty's UFOs, filmed near the coast: a 'disc on edge, with a small remote-controlled object under it' (top); and 'three mushroom-shaped objects travelling together' (above). There are several military bases within 15 miles (24 kilometres). It is a rural area, with few street lights – but there is a fault line to the south, so ufologists may speculate on the possibility of 'earth lights' being responsible

> In Betty's abduction case, as in some UFO contactee examples, there is the overall impression that the involved individual is a unique type of person whose talents (e.g. the ability to rapidly enter a deep hypnotic trance, dissociative traits, and high quality psi potentialities), latent or otherwise, are necessary for the UFOs, or the forces behind them. . . .

But Schwarz's view begs the question of whether any external agency is necessarily involved. An alternative possibility is that there are no UFOs or any other external agency manifesting itself in that form but that the whole experience is a 'projection' from an internal source, Betty's own mind.

Many people have taken it for granted that Betty's dreams and the couple's hypnosis narratives are consistent with each other because both were derived from the same source – that is, an actual UFO encounter. But this is a naïve and unwarranted assumption – for it is no less possible that the stories recounted under hypnosis derive from Betty's dreams.

But the moment we focus on Betty's dreams as a record of fact, the insubstantiality of the case becomes apparent. What is the likelihood that they offer a reliable account of a factual experience? This is not what most dreams do; they are generally either total fantasy, or reworkings of material drawn from a whole variety of sources: the dreamer's daily life, books and television, wishes and fears. We must be wary of supposing that Betty's dreams are any exception to this rule.

Dr Simon, the Hills' hypnotist, never committed himself to a definite statement, but he himself put forward the possibility that Betty's recounting of her dreams had influenced Barney, who then relived them as recollections of reality. It is noteworthy that, though Barney's UFO examination supposedly took longer than Betty's, his account of what was done is far less detailed than hers.

Why would Barney fantasise? Probably because he was looking for an external cause on which to blame his internal trouble, just as all of us are apt to do. The UFO sighting offered a convenient scapegoat. So Barney took Betty's fantasy and used it, albeit unconsciously, for his own purposes. Dr Simon ruled out any question of conscious collusion, let alone deceit: whatever process was operating, it was completely on the unconscious level.

Dr Simon warned that hypnosis was not a royal road to the discovery of truth, and further evidence has emerged in later years to confirm this. Hypnotic regressions, in particular, have been shown in numerous cases to produce narratives that are nothing more than fantasy (see page 2601). There is little evidence, on the other hand, for repressed experiences emerging as coherent, detailed and accurate narratives in dreams.

Inevitably, such an interpretation of the Hills' 'memories' of their abduction is bound to be pure conjecture. But it is not more conjectural than the hypothesis that the dreams and hypnosis stories are based on a real-life experience of a medical examination by beings from another world.

Further reading

John G. Fuller, *The interrupted journey*, Corgi 1981
Alan L. and Judith M. Gansberg, *Direct encounters*, Coronet 1981
Robert Sheaffer, *The UFO verdict*, Prometheus (Buffalo) 1981

continued from back cover

surprised to find his host charged him only 19 francs (the equivalent of £1.70 today). 'I thought there must be a mistake,' said Len. 'I'd reckoned on between 200 and 250 francs for the four of us, but he insisted the bill was right and I paid up.'

Before setting out for Spain, Len and Geoff took photographs of their wives standing by the shutters in their rooms. When they eventually set off they found that there was an autoroute to Avignon, though the gendarmes had not been at all forthcoming about this and their directions had referred only to the original Avignon road.

The hotel vanishes

One doesn't pass up an opportunity to spend a cheap night in a comfortable hotel so, on their return from Spain, the Gisbys and Simpsons again turned off the Montelimar Nord autoroute into the tree-lined avenue they remembered the hotel being in – but the place had vanished! Thinking they must have missed it, they turned around and drove back. Three times they drove up and down the avenue, but the hotel was nowhere to be seen. Even the place where they had parked the car – the lay-by backed by a brick wall – was missing.

'I am certain as can be that we were on the right road,' said Len. 'We went to the same Montelimar Nord turn-off, passed the same motel where we had originally asked for accommodation and where we had been advised to try down the road.

'We passed the same building on that road we passed before, with the same advertising sign on it and the same roadworks signs. We couldn't have been on a different road. That was the main road between Avignon and Lyon, apart from the autoroute.'

According to Len, everything about the place was the same, apart from the lay-by, the wall and the hotel.

The foursome were forced to continue to Lyon, where they stayed at an hotel that charged them 247 francs for bed and breakfast, evening meal and drinks.

Puzzling over the strange event the couples returned to Dover. Two weeks later, when the holiday photographs were developed, the mystery deepened. For on both rolls of film that Geoff and Len had taken, every photograph had come out with the exception of the ones taken at the mystery hotel. There were not even any spoiled negatives on the roll of film; it was as if the photographs had never been taken.

Later, talking over the bizarre occurrence with a French dressmaker friend, Len and Cynthia were surprised to learn that the three people they had seen that morning in the hotel must have been wearing clothes that dated back to the early 1900s. According to the friend, the style of the gendarmes' uniforms had certainly not been worn since 1905.

Of all the explanations that the Gisbys and Simpsons have been given, for Len and Cynthia, at least, only one seems to ring true. The couple are both sympathetic to the idea that what they experienced was a timeslip – the phenomenon that involves a person moving backwards or forwards in time and seeing and participating in life as it was once lived or as it will be lived.

Travellers in time?

Could the two couples have holidayed not just in another country but in another era in time then? Many people have claimed to have had similar experiences. Accounts suggest that the traveller is not aware of the transition from past to present (or vice versa) and is merely conscious of the sensation of having 'arrived'. It would appear that there is often a trigger that causes the timeslip – touching something that has ancient associations, for example, might account for a subject being transported backwards in time.

Unlike the Gisbys, Geoff and Pauline Simpson are still too confused and upset to give serious thought to possible explanations for what may have happened.

The Unexplained spoke to Thomas Cook, who have been in the travel business for a long time, to ask how much it would have cost to stay in an hotel in 1905. Spokesman Edmund Swinglehurst said: 'In those days we used to issue coupons for hotels. The nearest location we covered to Montelimar was the Grand Hotel du Louvres in Avignon. It cost 7/6d a day for the bedroom, breakfast and evening meal, and most guests had to share a bathroom. It is quite true that some hotels did have showers in 1905.'

A spokesman for the Montelimar Tourist Office has said that there were no hotels near the motel on the autoroute and that the nearest were all situated in Montelimar.

Len and Cynthia intend to solve the mystery of the missing hotel by driving back to France and trying to find the place where they stayed on that memorable October night. Says Len: 'Logic tells me I will find the hotel, but I know deep down I won't, because I don't believe there is a hotel there. But I won't be happy until I've tried.'

Another time, another place

There are not many cheap hotels that offer superb hospitality in an atmosphere of old-world charm. Four friends, however, discovered just such a place – or did they?

Holiday memories tend to blur with time but for Len and Cynthia Gisby and their friends Geoff and Pauline Simpson – whose story was first reported in the *Dover Express* of 11 October 1982 – the trip they took together in October 1979 is one they will never forget.

The foursome were driving through France, en route for their holiday in Spain, when they decided to call it a day and find an hotel. They stopped at a motel on the main Montelimar Nord autoroute, but it was fully booked, and they were told to try a road further on.

It was 10 p.m. when the couples from Dover eventually found an old hotel set in a tree-lined lane, just off the main autoroute. They pulled into a lay-by opposite the building and parked the car. Having driven several hundred kilometres that day the Gisbys and Simpsons were naturally feeling tired, and the old-world atmosphere that greeted them when they pushed open the heavy wooden door of the hotel was a comforting one. The landlord, a jovial middle-aged man, had no trouble in understanding English. After booking two rooms the friends settled down to a meal of steak, eggs and chips served up on old-fashioned plates. There were tankards of lager to follow. Satisfied with the meal the couples decided to turn in for the night.

There were some surprises in store for them when they investigated their bedrooms. 'We were struck by how old-fashioned they were,' said Len. 'The beds were very high with bolsters instead of pillows. And there were thick sheets and several blankets, and the windows didn't have any glass in them, just wooden shutters. The doors didn't have any locks either, just wooden latches. We weren't all that bothered because everything was very comfortable and, being in rural France, we just thought that that was the way of life there.'

The bathroom – which was shared – was also somewhat unusual. The old-fashioned tub was on legs and there was an equally ancient-looking shower attached to the wall and covered by a grille. Even the soap, instead of the usual loose tablets, was attached to the bath by an iron rod.

At 7 a.m. the next day, after a good night's sleep, the foursome sat down to a typical continental breakfast of coffee, bread and jam. Just as they were finishing their meal a young woman came in, followed immediately by two gendarmes. Len was struck by the men's uniforms: both wore gaiters, high hats and capes – outfits quite dissimilar to the ones they had seen gendarmes wearing the day before. Len said: 'The young woman was dressed strangely too, in a long chiffon dress and button-up boots, the type I remember my granny used to wear.'

Len asked the gendarmes for directions to the autoroute for Avignon. 'The French policemen seemed puzzled at the word autoroute but they gave directions for Avignon,' said Len.

Once breakfast was over, Mr Gisby sought out the landlord to settle the bill and was

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The Gisbys (in the foreground) and the Simpsons enjoying themselves in a restaurant that *does* appear in the guide books